

A LETTER

*From Dr. BRAY, to such as have Contributed to
wards the Propagating Christian Knowledge in
the Plantations.*

BEing apprehensive that my so sudden Return for *England*, may occasion some Misconstructions, till the true Reasons thereof shall be understood, to the prejudice of those Designs, which you do so nobly support, for the Destruction of the Powers of Darkeness, and the Enlargement of Christ's Kingdom in His Majesty's Plantations; I thought my self in Duty, Gratitude, and in Prudence bound, to represent hereby a General View of those Reasons, which have induced me to make it so soon, and unexpectedly. And they are as follows.

FIRST, It is pursuant to the Desire of the General Assembly of *Mary-Land*; who having most unanimously passed a Bill of the Highest Consequence for the Establishment of our Church, voted that I should be desired to request my Lord's Grace of *Canterbury*, and my Lord Bishop of *London*, to favour that good Law, by obtaining His Majesty's Royal Assent to the same, with all convenient Expedition. And the Members, who gave me an Account of passing such a Vote, told me withal, that it was the General Opinion, that I could be most serviceable herein, by waiting personally upon Their Lordships, rather than by Letters: In which I could not crowd all that may be necessary to be represented concerning the present State of the Church, and the Necessity, at this time, of their utmost Patronage. And it was in Debate, whether I should not be desired by the Assembly so to do: But that it was thought this would be to unreasonable a Request, they being sensible of the great Charges and Fatigues I had been already at, in the Service of that Province; as they had a few days before acknowledged by a Message from the House, with their Thanks for the same.

SECONDLY, It is at the joint Request of the Clergy of *Mary-Land*, who at the Close of my Visitation, amongst other pressing Reasons, urged me with this, that they found it to be the earnest Desire of the most sensible, and well-affected to our Religion, throughout the Province, that I should go over with the Law for *England*; Now that the Quakers are openly, and the Papists more covertly, making their utmost Efforts against the Establishment of our Church, by false Representations at home, of the Numbers and Riches of their Party; and by insinuating, That to impose upon them an Establish'd Maintenance for the Clergy, would be prejudicial to the Interest of the Province, by obliging so many wealthy Traders to remove from thence. The Falsity of which they thought me best able to make appear, by means of my late Parochial Visitations, throughout the greatest Part of the Province; more especially, by the Returns given in upon my *Tabula prima Parochialium Inquirendorum*; by which, when they shall be all sent in, I shall be enabled to give an Account of the Names of all Heads of Families, and not only of the Religion, but in a good measure of the Morals of every Man, Woman and Child, Freeman and Slave, White and Black, throughout *Mary-Land*.

THIRDLY, Having answer'd the Clergy, that I could easily be perswaded, either to go or stay, by the same Motives that urged my coming so many Thousand

land Miles to visit them; *viz.* as it should appear to me wherein I could be most serviceable to the Church, by the one, or the other: Yet being resolv'd to pay the greatest Deference to those in Authority, I should determine my self in so nice a Point by the Judgment of the Governor. Upon which the Clergy having addressed his Excellency with their Reasons, he was pleas'd to prevent my waiting upon him, by coming to me immediately as soon as the Visitation was finished, and declared himself to be very much of the same Opinion with the Clergy, as to the Importance of my going over.

FOURTHLY, It is to represent to my Superiors the State of Religion in *Mary Land, Pennsylvania, the East and West Jerseys*, which requires some speedy Consideration; and with reference to which, I have several things to propose to my Superiors, wherein I shall want their Instructions.

FIFTHLY, It is in order to make the better Choice of proper Ministers for the Service of those Churches, agreeable to what I have observed of the State, the Temper, and Constitution of the Country and People: Of which Ministers, as there are still wanting at least Thirty; so they must have some peculiar Qualifications, if they would do good there. To supply which want, and to get such qualify'd Persons, it is necessary to confer with my Lord of *London*: As also to write to such of my Lords the Bishops, and the Reverend Arch-Deacons, as I have the Honour to be known to, to recommend to me proper Persons, such as they know to be, not only of an exact Conduct, both as to Prudence, and all other good Morals, and have been for some time Curates, well experienced in the Pastoral Care; but also of a true publick, disinterested; in one word, of a *Missionary Spirit*, having a Zeal for God's Glory, and the Salvation of Mens Souls; and such as are by no means grown into Years, who cannot endure Fatigue; (the Parishes as yet being very large) nor yet on the other side, raw young Men, who can never preserve themselves above Contempt amongst a People of such quick Parts, and good Intellectuals, as the Plantation-People are generally observ'd to be.

SIXTHLY, It may perhaps appear of less weight than it really is, should I give it as one of my Reasons, that I may procure, and carry back with me a considerable number of *Carpenters, Bricklayers, and Joiners*, to finish some Churches, and to build *Parsonage-Houses* upon the Glebes; which I have already procur'd and hope in a short time to have settled throughout the Province. The want of Workmen makes Building there excessively chargeable; so that I find upon auditing the Accounts of the several Vestries in my Parochial Visitations, that the large Sums laid out in building their Churches, is by no means answer'd in the Fabricks: And therefore to husband the Charity of the Country, there shall be given towards building of the Parsonage Houses, so as it shall be more extensive, I have brought the Clergy into a Subscription, to maintain every one his Work-man, and to allow him much better than the Custom of the Country is to do, and yet to be no Losers thereby themselves. By which means I am enabled to make such Proposals, as will give sufficient Encouragement to good Workmen, and sober Persons, to go over with me. But though this may be too mean a Consideration; yet,

LASTLY, I hope this may appear of some weight; that it is, Because I find there comes under my Cognizance several very important Cases to be speedily tried, with relation to the Clergy and Laity. To determine several of which, being of so high a Nature, as *Forgery of Holy Orders, Polygamy and Incest*, I want Instructions as to the Manner and Forms of Proceedings: And as it appears to me, have no Power, by my Commission, to give such Sentences as the Nature of the Crimes will require. And in the due Execution of which, as I perceive that I have many Eyes upon me; so the Country expects that something should be done effectually in that Matter; and should I fail therein, my being there would be to no manner of purpose of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and the necessary Regulation of the Clergy and Laity.

I hope

I hope these Reasons may appear sufficient to Persons of that singular Candour, and Goodness, which I have found in you. But because it is fit you should be in some measure satisfy'd at present (tho' I intend to do it hereafter in an ample and publick manner) of the good that has been wrought by your means; I do assure you, that besides the very useful Libraries, which are provided through your Benefactions, and are settled in *Pensylvania, New-York, New-England, Carolina, Bermudas*, are begun in several of the *Leward Islands*, and are far advanc'd in *Mary-Land*; I have received in the latter the Acknowledgments of the most publick Persons, that the Face of Things, as to Religion, Humanity, and good Morals, is very much alter'd for the better within these few Years, that a Clergy have been sent amongst them: And have, I hope in my Visitation, set the Clergy in such Methods, as, with the Divine Benediction upon their Endeavours, will render them a continued Blessing to those Parts.

And it may not be amiss to add, that as I have personally found the whole Body of the *Mary-Land* Clergy (excepting two, who have in part met already, and will sufficiently feel the Effects of Discipline,) to give me an unusual Demonstration of their *Pastoral Care*: And some of them to have so signalized themselves, by their Industry, in the Instruction of the *Negro's* within their respective Parishes, (of which they have baptized great Numbers) that these poor Barbarians are not now the most ignorant, and least Solemn Part of their Assemblies; So at *Philadelphia* in *Pensylvania*, the Congregation of Church-People, which amounted but to 60, at the most, not two Years ago, through the Blessing of God upon the Endeavours of a late *Missionary*, is now increas'd, chiefly from *Quaker-Converts*, to upwards of 700. And the People of that Province do earnestly desire to be supply'd with several Ministers more; as indeed I think the Field is there, and the Neighbouring Parts, so happily sown by the excellent Mr. *Keith*, that it is become now as ripe for Harvest, as in any part of the Christian World. And it being a main part of my Design in coming over at this time, to procure, and take back very speedily with me, right worthy Men, such as are capable to do the greatest good, I do earnestly desire, that if you know any Clergyman so qualified, and alike Spirited as Characterized above in the Fifth Article, you would lay before him what Service he may do to the Church of God in those Parts, now that there is so happy a Disposition therein to receive the Truth. I am sorry that, in the present State I find that Church, which is but in its Infancy, I cannot promise that their Places will be very considerable, the Glebes which I have, and am about to get, being as yet uncultivated. But I can assure them, they may at this juncture be very *Extraordinarily* instrumental to the Glory of God, the best Argument I can use to such Persons as I want; and that which has been the great Motive, and sole Support, during a five Years Service to those Churches, to him that uses it: Also that their Livings will be improvable, and that they shall find all possible Encouragement that may be contriv'd, and procur'd by their most Affectionate Brother, and

Your most Faithful Servant,

THO. BRAY.

